



Instructions in the Application and Scoring Of the Healthy Marriage Self-Assessment Tool

The Healthy Marriage Self Assessment Tool was created for FRIENDS, the National Resource Center for Community Based Child Abuse Prevention programs. (CBCAP). This tool is to be used on a voluntary basis. The purpose of this self-assessment tool is to help state lead agencies and their networks of programs strengthen their work regarding healthy marriages and relationships. The tool can be used to assist both established programs as well as those organizations interested in developing this component in their menu of offerings. There is no expectation that every program will be able to address the full complement of a healthy marriage initiative as found in this tool. This tool is particularly important for CBCAP grantees as they work to strengthen families and augment protective factors and resiliency, leading to better outcomes for children. The characteristics of healthy marriages include strong marital bonds that build closeness and autonomy, promote effective communication, empathy, and understanding. Strong positive relationships among fathers and mothers help enhance the quality of parenting and enrich relationships of both parents with their children.

Strong relationships contribute to the well being of children and their families.

This tool was developed by the National Practitioners Network for Fathers & Families in collaboration with other marriage and family support experts. It was developed in response to numerous requests for a concise method to enhance programs ability to select and provide targeted services for low- and moderate-income individuals and couples considering marriage or seeking to improve/enhance their current relationship.

The Healthy Marriage Self Assessment Tool (HMSAT) is intended to present a broad perspective to providers, allowing the tool to be applicable to a wide range of family service agencies. Programs should have policies, plans, and procedures set in order to provide these services. Application has proven most beneficial when conducted in a mixed group instruction setting, inviting a broad cross-section of community providers that offers a wide range of practice options as well as community leaders and parents. Remember, the intent of this tool is NOT to imply that the reader

or agency must apply each and every item to the operations of your organization. It is intended to serve as a discussion tool and as a guide for staff and parents to consider in efforts to expand capacity and implement healthy marriage education and support services.

Scoring

The format of the HMSAT asks the reader to select one of four responses to score each item on your form.

Excellent indicates that this item has been implemented and that the majority of those who provide (staff) and use (clients) this are very satisfied with the quality of the service.

Good indicates that this item has been implemented and that there is general satisfaction with the service on the part of staff and clients.

Fair indicates that this item has been implemented but clearly is in need of improvement.

For organizations not currently providing such services, this listing may be used as a guide to develop healthy marriage services.



HEALTHY MARRIAGE PROGRAM SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Program Activity	Excellent	Good	Fair	N / A	Comments and Examples
Administration and Management					
1. Agency management supports efforts to promote healthy marriage in program development and implementation					
2. The agency has identified a key person to coordinate the healthy marriage efforts on-site					
a) The coordinator has the capacity and time to fulfill these responsibilities					
b) The program has the capacity to accomplish its goals and objectives					
3. The Agency has determined its target area and recruitment strategies regarding healthy marriage services.					
4. The agency has a recruitment and enrollment plan for couples and individuals.					
5. The program has established partnerships with local and national organizations that promote healthy marriages					
6. The agency has established a Healthy Marriage Advisory Committee to provide guidance for service development and enhancement that:					
a) incorporates a range of socioeconomic perspectives					
b) reflects the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of current and potential clients					
c) includes positive male and female role models					

Program Activity	Excellent	Good	Fair	N / A	Comments and Examples
d) possesses expertise in marriage education and marriage preparation					
e) reflects faith-based and secular community organizations					
f) possesses the capacity to engage and motivate couples					
g) other					
7. Program has strategies in place to work with local service providers, including:					
a) community-based family resource centers					
b) agencies serving fathers and men in families					
c) health and pre-natal clinics for low-income families					
d) adolescent parent programs					
e) faith-based organizations					
f) cultural-specific family service agencies					
g) elementary and secondary schools					
h) early childhood programs, Head Start					
i) TANF, job training, job placement					
j) social services/child welfare services					
k) other WIC, home-visiting agencies, housing authorities					
8. Program offers services or has contact and referral strategies for services that address enhancing personal skills in:					
a) relationship building					
b) conflict resolution					
c) creating positive family rituals					

Program Activity	Excellent	Good	Fair	N / A	Comments and Examples
d) promoting marital resiliency					
e) mentoring at-risk couples					
f) strategies to prevent problems rather than to correct them					
g) stress awareness and reduction					
h) interpersonal communication					
i) establishing personal support systems					
j) financial management/budgeting					
9. The program works to bolster public support for healthy marriage and responds by:					
a) identifying existing federal and state regulations/policies that promote healthy marriages					
b) working with local and national media to publicize marriage education/promotion events					
c) sponsoring or co-sponsoring community forums, i.e. focus groups, town hall meetings, public hearings, or other means to encourage and promote healthy marriages					
10. The agency has a plan in place to respond to the comments from these community input means.					
11. The program works with other agencies, community services and local planning groups to:					
a) increase their understanding and receptivity to marriage education and promotion					
b) jointly plan events and programs together					
c) provide joint staff development and program enhancement opportunities					

Program Activity	Excellent	Good	Fair	N / A	Comments and Examples
d) coordinate the planning and implementation of local marriage enrichment programs and services					
12. Marriage education activities / services connect with or are integrated into to the overall program / agency.					
13. Program works with domestic violence and child abuse prevention providers to:					
a) plan and implement healthy marriage services					
b) provide staff training to recognize signs of abuse and how to make appropriate referrals					
14. The agency conducts orientation sessions for staff and parents/clients.					
15. The agency has performed a needs assessment to determine if its mission, goals, and objectives address healthy marriage needs in the community.					
16. The agency community assessment process includes healthy marriage resources and services.					
Client Services - Recruitment					
17. Outreach and recruitment materials for couples:					
a) describe ways that individuals and couples can be involved in the program					
b) describe programs offered to strengthen healthy marriages					
c) include images of couples from a range of cultures / ethnicities/incomes in the community					

Program Activity	Excellent	Good	Fair	N / A	Comments and Examples
d) are written in language that appeals to a wide range of couples					
e) are printed in the languages spoken by couples living in the community					
f) provide specific information about services, activities locations					
g) provide eligibility information					
h) provide information about fees, vouchers, scholarships and other alternatives					
i) includes other relevant information					
18. Information about the program is placed in locations, local organizations, businesses and media outlets that are popular with a range of couples: co-habiting, engaged, expectant, at-risk, newlywed, young parents, immigrant, etc.					
19. Program promotes healthy marriages in a variety of ways:					
a) sponsoring marriage promotion activities: e.g. celebrity testimonials, family celebrations, anniversary / longevity celebrations					
b) speaking at local businesses, community events, civic organizations.					
c) conducting community awareness campaigns on benefits of healthy marriage skills needed to increase marriage stability and healthy relationships					
d) sponsoring marriage enrichment activities: e.g. couples weekends, annual conferences.					

Program Activity	Excellent	Good	Fair	N / A	Comments and Examples
20. The program works with other agencies to strengthen their capacity to promote healthy marriages in their services and activities.					
21. The program has established marriage education resource links to the agency's website.					
22. Activities and services are scheduled at times that are convenient for couples to attend and are responsive to work schedules and other responsibilities.					
23. The reception area, activity rooms, and offices are comfortable and accommodating for men as well as for women and children.					
24. The program offers couples a variety of opportunities to gain information and support, such as:					
a) the benefits of marriage					
b) what to expect in marriage					
c) sustaining healthy relationships					
d) healthy conflict resolution					
e) mediation skills					
f) couples communication					
g) expectations about marriage within cultural and faith traditions					
h) mentor couple training					
i) healthy emotional and sexual expression within marriage					
j) marriage program leadership development					
k) positive parenting techniques					

Program Activity	Excellent	Good	Fair	N / A	Comments and Examples
l) family planning					
m) individual, couple and family goal setting					
n) commitment, compassion and forgiveness					
o) other					
25. The program encourages participation by:					
a) operating in convenient, accessible locations					
b) providing vouchers and/or sliding fees for clients to attend marriage education activities					
c) offering age appropriate childcare during activities for couples					
d) transportation assistance					
e) sponsoring a lending library for individuals to access relevant educational materials					
f) offering incentives, food, coupons, give-aways / door prizes, bus tokens, gift cards, etc.					
g) providing interpreter/translation services					
26. Experienced couples are involved in reviewing and adapting curricula and materials for program refinement.					
Services - Support for Couples					
27. Program coordinates with Case management services are offered to monitor individual and couple progress, coordinate services, and provide additional supports as necessary, including:					
a) current relationship status and marital assessment					
b) optimizing family living skills					

Program Activity	Excellent	Good	Fair	N / A	Comments and Examples
c) strengthening relationship skills					
d) preparing for or enhancing parenting skills					
e) referral and follow up to appropriate community resources					
28. Program offers support services through referral to assistance with:					
a) family mediation services					
b) healthy sexuality					
c) positive communication					
d) marital resiliency					
e) anger management					
f) domestic violence services					
g) child abuse prevention services					
f) healthy conflict resolution					
29. Couples help develop and lead activities and programs to meet their personal and family goals.					
30. The program helps couples to meet / get to know other couples/ discuss common interests / have fun with other couples through activities such as: family outings, special events, longevity celebrations, etc					
31. The program hosts activities for engaged couples					
32. The program provides information and services for cohabiting couples to help them learn skills that promote healthy marriages/ relationships					
33. The program offers services to newlywed couples to enhance their marital relationships					

Program Activity	Excellent	Good	Fair	N / A	Comments and Examples
34. The program sponsors training events on marriage education and marriage enhancement					
35. The program follows up with couples seeking additional assistance in strengthening / enhancing their relationship to connect them to appropriate community resources					
36. The program provides education opportunities in healthy relationships and marriage preparation for adolescents					
37. The program celebrates couples' participation in the program and their accomplishments					
Services - Support for Individuals					
38. Clients have the opportunity to meet privately with staff member regarding individual concerns.					
39. A staff member assists individuals in identifying their strengths, skills, past successes and needs.					
40. Using intake and/or assessment information, clients may:					
a) develop goals for themselves, their marriage and their family					
b) identify resources within their own family, the program and the community					
c) make a plan to meet their goals					
d) seek individual or couple counseling					
41. The program facilitates access to activities, services and information that address:					
a) health conditions and needs					
b) education needs					

Program Activity	Excellent	Good	Fair	N / A	Comments and Examples
c) employment, job training and job search					
d) developing healthy relationships with their spouse and/or children					
e) spiritual growth and religious interests					
f) emotional / mental health needs, i.e. isolation, stress, loss and grief, anger / resentment, etc.					
g) financial challenges, i.e. budgeting, debt, credit repair, etc.					
h) legal issues, i.e.					
i) substance / drug treatment needs					
j) housing services					
k) domestic violence assessment					
l) transportation needs					
m) child care/adult care					
n) other intervention resources					
42. The program assists individuals to strengthen their:					
a) sense of self worth					
b) communication skills					
c) problem solving skills / negotiation skills					
d) marital resiliency					
e) marriageability					
43. The program recognizes individual's and couple's efforts and progress in achieving their goals					

Program Activity	Excellent	Good	Fair	N / A	Comments and Examples
44. Individuals have opportunities to learn about and / or meet with specialists re: specific concerns about their relationship skills					
45. Program employs a range of assessment instruments, e.g. Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test, Weiss-Cereto Marital Status Inventory, the Gain Q.					
46. The program helps individuals think about and reflect on how their marital relationship is impacted by:					
a) their values, feelings about themselves and their spiritual or religious beliefs					
b) their childhood and experiences with their own families growing up					
c) their capacity to express their emotions in healthy ways					
d) their cultural traditions and expectations about marriage					
e) their own ability to handle problems and resolve conflicts					
f) what is important to them as a spouse and as a parent					
g) their views about money, budgeting, and financial management					
h) their parents styles					
i) other (list)					
Services - Parenting Support					
47. The program provides opportunities for couples to enhance their parenting skills related to:					
a) communication with children					
b) supporting children's healthy growth and development					

Program Activity	Excellent	Good	Fair	N / A	Comments and Examples	
c) supporting children's education						
d) supporting children's physical development						
e) positive behavior guidance						
f) nurturing their children's social, emotional, spiritual development and creativity						
g) problem solving and decision-making						
h) moral development/character education						
i) co-parenting						
Staff Development						
48. Staff have opportunities to learn more about healthy marriages, including:						
a) the benefits of marriage						
b) family formation options						
c) couple and family mediations skills						
d) cross-gender communication						
e) marriage education curricula and materials						
f) men's and women's learning styles						
g) the impact of change and / or instability, e.g. violence / trauma, grief, loss, separation, etc.						
h) couples' mentorship training						
i) intervention strategies in relapse prevention						
49. Staff are trained in administering and interpreting marital assessment instruments						

Program Activity	Excellent	Good	Fair	N / A	Comments and Examples
50. Staff reflect the racial, ethnic, linguistic and cultural heritage of individuals and couples served.					
51. Staff are knowledgeable and skilled in gender sensitive areas, such as:					
a) men's and women's learning styles					
b) men's and women's communication styles					
c) paternal and maternal parenting approaches					
d) ethnic and cultural values and expectations regarding gender roles and couple relationships					
e) marriageability issues					
52. Ongoing training is provided to all staff with skills to engage and work with individuals and couples considering marriage.					
53. The program evaluates staff on a wide range of abilities including their capacity to effectively work with couples.					
54. The agency has an effective management information system (MIS) and evaluation procedure in place to provide accurate, confidential, and timely information regarding individuals and couples.					
55. Couples who have completed the program are recruited to work as mentors, recruiters, group facilitators, trainers, volunteers, etc.					
56. The program maintains a monitoring system to support the implementation of quality services for individuals and couples.					

Program Activity	Excellent	Good	Fair	N / A	Comments and Examples
57. The program routinely collects, analyzes and uses information from satisfaction surveys solicited from individuals and couples to make programmatic adjustments					
58. The program routinely surveys couples about how the program has impacted their sense of well-being, ability to manage, their knowledge and use of community resources, their relationship skills, attitudes and values, etc.					
59. Program maintains a process to gather baseline data, establish performance objectives and evaluate marriage education program activities on a regular basis e.g. pre- and post-tests.					

Comments: